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Sermonettes *Félicité*
De Lamennais

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SERMONETTES
OF
FÉLICITÉ ROBERT DE LAMENNAIS

**HELPFUL THOUGHTS
SERIES**

FOUR VOLUMES

I

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

II

RIGHT READING

III

CATCHWORDS OF CHEER

IV

SERMONETTES

SERMONETTES

**SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM
THE FRENCH**

OF

FÉLICITÉ ROBERT DE LAMENNAIS

BY

J. L. JACOBSON VAN HEMERT



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG & COMPANY

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PUBLISHED MAY 7, 1904

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

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NOTE

FÉLICITÉ ROBERT de LAMENNAIS was born at St. Malo, in the northwest of France, in June, 1782, and died in Paris, February 27, 1854.

The greater part of these *Sermonettes* has been selected from his "*Paroles d'un Croyant*" (Words of a Believer), and a few from "*Une Voix de Prison*" (A Voice from Prison) and "*Le Livre du Peuple*" (The Book of the People).

"*Paroles d'un Croyant*" stands alone in literature for both the simplicity and the sublimity of its thought and language. It is a poem in rhythmical prose. It is arranged in short verses like those of the Bible, under forms now parabolic, now direct; at one moment recalling the gloom of Dante's "*Inferno*," at another the tenderness of the "*Imitation of Christ*." While the style is strikingly aphoristic, it is also delightfully fluent and harmonious. It is

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said that Lamennais composed this work in one week's time, walking up and down under the oaks of La Chênaie, an estate that belonged to him. It created an extraordinary sensation, and was immediately translated into all the European and several Oriental languages.

M. Sainte-Beuve, the eminent critic, held Lamennais and his writings in high esteem, and was deputed by him to secure a publisher and a printer for the "*Paroles d'un Croyant*." In an article published in his "*Nouveaux Lundis*" he thus tells the tale:—

"At the end of March or the beginning of April, 1834, M. de Lamennais, with whom I was at that time intimate (and with him there were no half-friendships), wrote me a word expressing the desire to see me regarding a matter that was urgent. I hastened to his house; he dwelt at the end of the Rue de Vaugirard, in a large house which he occupied with some of his friends. On arriving, I saw a carriage at the door, and in crossing the courtyard I met the Archbishop of Paris, M. de Quélen, who was coming from visiting M. de Lamennais, and, with-

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out doubt, lavishing attentions on him in order to influence him. On stepping, in my turn, into the room from which the prelate was passing out, and sitting on the couch on which M. de Lamennais had seated him, I observed that the latter was much agitated; he did not even allow me to begin. 'My dear friend,' said he to me without more preface, 'it is time that all this were settled; I have asked you to come. Here,' added he, opening the drawer of the little wooden table near which we were seated, and taking from it a rather thin manuscript-book of delicate penmanship, 'here is a little work which I hand over to you, and which I wish you would publish as soon as possible. I am going away in two days; arrange this before that time with a publisher—quickly, very quickly, I pray you. I do not wish to put my name to it.' I replied that I would go at once and set about finding a publisher—a very easy matter with his name, a little more difficult, perhaps, anonymously. I went immediately to Eugene Renduel, who agreed at once, regretting only that the author did not wish to give his name. But when I returned next day to see M. de Lamennais, he had

NOTE

changed his mind ; he consented to put his name to the book. He received the visit of the publisher, came to an understanding with him, and departed, leaving to me the charge of the printing. 'You are absolute master,' said he to me ; 'you shall change whatever you please.' That was an expression of confidence of which I fully intended not to avail myself.

"The printing began. I ought to make a confession which is not creditable to the acumen of the critic. I speak only of my own. As soon as I was in possession of the little manuscript, I had glanced over it, but had not fully appreciated its worth, its vitality. We were at that time punctilious in the matter of style. The form of that eloquent pamphlet — a little declamatory, a little obscure — had concealed from me at first that there was in it a fire that might spread and break out, — that which made me say afterwards to the author : 'Well, human feeling has been touched !' "

Sainte-Beuve tells us how he found the composers gathered around while one of their number read the manuscript aloud, his voice trembling

NOTE

with emotion. The reading over, they fell upon each other's necks, kissing one another and giving it as their conviction that the time would be soon at hand when an era of universal brotherhood would dawn upon the world.

"Une Voix de Prison" and "Le Livre du Peuple" may be considered sequels to the "Paroles d'un Croyant," and fully equal to it so far as style is concerned.

There have been omitted, as of no interest to readers of the present time, those chapters that preach rebellion to the downtrodden poor of Lamennais's time.

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I—Love

YOU have only a day to spend here on earth ; act in such a manner that you may spend it in peace.

Peace is the fruit of love ; for, in order to live in peace, we must bear with a great many things.

None is perfect, each has his failings ; each hangs upon the other, and love alone renders that weight light.

If you cannot bear with your brother, how will your brother bear with you ?

It is written of the Son of Mary, that, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

For that reason, love your brother, who is in the world, and love him unto the end.

Love is indefatigable ; it never grows weary. Love is inexhaustible ; it lives and is born anew

SERMONETTES

in the living, and the more it pours itself out, the fuller its fountain.

Whosoever loves himself better than he loves his brother, is not worthy of Christ, who died for his brothers. Have you given away everything you possess? Go and give up your life also! Love will restore all to you.

Verily I say unto you, the heart of the man that loves is a paradise on earth. He has God within him, for God is love.

The wicked man loves not, he covets; he hungers and thirsts for everything; his eye, like unto the eye of the serpent, fascinates and allures, but only to devour.

Love rests at the bottom of every pure soul, like a drop of dew in the calyx of a flower.

Oh, if you knew what it is to love!

You say that you love, and many of your brothers are in want of bread to sustain their life; in want of clothing to cover their naked limbs; in want of a roof to shelter themselves; in want of a handful of straw to sleep on — whilst you have all things in abundance.

LOVE

You say that you love, and a great number there are, who, destitute of succor, pine away their lives in sickness on a miserable couch—poor wretches who weep, whilst no one weeps with them ; many little children who, shivering with cold, go from door to door, beseeching the rich for the crumbs from their table, and do not obtain them.

You say that you love your brothers ; and what would you do, then, if you hated them ?

Verily I say unto you, whosoever, being able to do so, does not relieve his brother who suffers, is an enemy to his brother ; and whosoever, being able to do so, does not give nourishment to his starving brother, is his murderer.

II—Prayer

WHEN you have prayed, do you not feel your heart lighter, and your soul more content?

Prayer makes affliction less grievous, and joy more pure ; it imparts to the one I know not what of strength and of sweetness, and to the other a celestial perfume.

What do ye on the earth, and have ye nothing to ask of Him who placed you here ?

You are a traveller in search of his fatherland. Walk not with head bent down ; you must raise your eyes to know your way.

Your fatherland is heaven ; and, when you look up to heaven, does it move you in no way ? does no desire press upon you ? or is that desire dumb ?

There are some who say : Of what benefit is prayer ? God is too far above us to listen to creatures so pitiful.

SERMONETTES

And who then made these pitiful creatures? who gave them feeling, thought, and speech, if not God?

And if He has been so good to them, was it to cast them off afterwards, and to keep them afar from Him?

Verily I say unto you, whosoever says within his heart that God despises His works, blasphemes God.

There are others who say: What is the use of praying? Does God not know better than we, what we need?

God does know better than you, what you need, and it is for this reason, that He wishes you to ask it of Him; for God Himself is your first need, and to pray to God, is to begin to possess God.

The father knows the needs of his son; must that be a reason, why the son never should have a word of request and of thanksgiving for his father?

When the animals suffer, when they are in fear, or when they are hungry, they utter plain-

PRAAYER

tive cries. These cries are the prayer which they address to God, and God listens. Should man be then, the only being in creation whose voice never ascends to the ear of the Creator?

Sometimes there passes over the fields a wind which dries up the plants, and then their withered stems are seen to droop to the earth; but, moistened by the dew, they regain their freshness, and raise anew their languishing heads.

There are always blasting winds, which pass over the soul of man, and dry it up. Prayer is the dew which revives it.

III — The Unbeliever

YOU will meet men who love not God, and who fear Him not. Shun them, for a vapor of malediction issues from them.

Shun the impious, for his breath kills ; but hate him not, for who knows, if God has not already changed his heart ?

The man, who, even sincerely, says : “ I believe not,” often deceives himself. Deep down in the soul, at the very bottom, there is a root of faith, which withers not.

The word that denies God, scorches the lips over which it passes, and the mouth that opens to blaspheme, is a vent of hell.

The impious is alone in the Universe. All creatures praise God ; all that feel bless Him, all that think adore Him. The sun by day and stars by night sing Him in their mysterious language.

SERMONETTES

He has written on the firmament His name
thrice holy.

Glory to God in the highest !

He has written it likewise in the heart of man,
and the good man preserves it there with love ;
but others endeavor to blot it out.

Peace on earth to men of good will !

Their sleep is sweet, and their death is still
more sweet, for they know that they return to
their Father.

Even as the poor laborer, at the decline of
day, quits the fields, seeks his hut, and sitting
down at the door, forgets his weariness in view-
ing the heavens, — so, when evening comes, the
man of hope returns with joy to his Father's
house, and, sitting on the threshold, forgets the
toils of exile in the visions of eternity.

IV — The Exile

HE went about, wandering over the earth. Be Thou, O God, the guide of the poor exile !

I have passed among the different nations, and they have looked at me, and I have looked at them, and we have not recognized one another. The exile is everywhere alone.

When, at the decline of day, I saw the smoke arise from a hut in the depth of the valley, I said to myself: Happy the man who at night returns to the domestic fireside, and sits down there in the midst of his family. The exile is everywhere alone.

Whither go those clouds, which the storm drives onward? It drives me onward like them, and what do I care whither? The exile is everywhere alone.

These trees are beautiful, these flowers are beautiful; but, they are not the flowers and

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trees of my country : they say nothing to me.
The exile is everywhere alone.

This brooklet runs smoothly through the plain ;
but its purling is not that to which the ear of
my childhood listened : it calls back to my soul
not one reminiscence. The exile is everywhere
alone.

These songs are sweet ; but the melancholy
and the gladness which they awake are neither
my melancholy, nor my gladness. The exile is
everywhere alone.

People have asked me : Why do you weep ?
and when I told them the reason, none wept
with me, because none understood me. The
exile is everywhere alone.

I have seen aged men, surrounded with chil-
dren, like the olive-tree with its shoots ; but
not one of those aged men called me son, not
one of those children called me brother. The
exile is everywhere alone.

I have seen young maidens smile with a smile
as pure as the breeze of morning, on him whom
their love had chosen for a spouse ; but not

THE EXILE

one smiled on me. The exile is everywhere alone.

I have seen young men embrace breast to breast, as if of two lives they would make but one; but not one shook hands with me. The exile is everywhere alone.

There are no friends, no wives, no fathers, no brothers, but in one's native country. The exile is everywhere alone.

Poor exile! cease thy lamentations! All are banished like thyself: all see fathers, brothers, wives, and friends pass away and vanish.

Our fatherland is not here below; man seeks it here in vain; what he calls so is only a resting-place for the night.

He goes about, wandering over the earth. Be Thou, O God, the guide of the poor exile!

V—We Walk in Darkness

THAT which thine eyes behold, that which thine hands touch, are mere shadows, and the sound which strikes thine ear is but a rough echo of the internal and mysterious voice which worships, and prays, and groans in the womb of creation.

For every creature is groaning, every creature is in the travail of being born,—struggling to be born into the true life, to pass from darkness to light, from the region of shadows to that of realities.

That sun, so brilliant, so beautiful, is but the garment, the uncertain emblem of the true sun, which illumines and warms the soul.

That earth, so rich, so green, is but the winding-sheet of nature ; for nature, fallen into decay also, has gone down to the tomb like man, but like him she will come forth from it.

SERMONETTES

In this heavy wrapping of flesh, you resemble a traveller who, at night in his tent, sees, or thinks he sees, phantoms pass.

The real world is veiled from you. He who retires wholly within himself, catches a glimpse of it as from afar. Secret powers, which slumber in him, awake for a moment, lift a corner of the veil which time holds in his shrivelled hand, and the soul is ravished with the wonders it beholds.

You are sitting on the shore of the ocean of being, but, you cannot penetrate its depths. You walk in the evening beside the sea, and you see but a little foam, cast upon the strand by the surge.

With what shall I compare you further?

You are like the child in the womb of its mother, awaiting the hour of birth; like the winged insect in the worm that creeps, eager to come out from this earthly prison to take flight for Heaven.

VI—The True End of Life

WHEREFORE run ye after shadows? Why do you forget your true end?

Deceitful glimmerings, alluring voices invite you to places barren and desolate, where hope herself dies away in never-ending night.

Who does not know that the wants of the flesh must be satisfied? It is the condition of existence. But, the wants,—is that all? The appetites,—is that all?

Are you only body, that you seek in the body the great, unlimited good to which you aspire?

To-morrow, what will that body be? A handful of ashes. Each day it advances toward the grave. Is that the pathway of your desires?

The very brute buries not itself wholly in its senses and in the enjoyments of sense. It has instincts more elevated, joys more intense. With-

SERMONETTES

out knowing, it shows you from afar the goal toward which you should tend.

Do you wish to sink below the brute? and if you so wish, of what do you complain? Does one stoop so low without distress? Can one struggle against his nature, slaughter it without suffering?

That dark spectre, shapeless and without speech, which stifles you in its embrace, know ye its name? Its name is Matter.

Tell them this, for I pity that poor people:

The body is not man, but the covering of man.

Life is not eating and drinking, but knowledge and love.

The lowest beings of the Creation eat and drink, and that suffices them; man thinks, loves, devotes himself, gives himself up, that I may give Myself to him, and that he may find in Me, in the True, in the Good, in the Beautiful, food for his soul, that by which he really lives.

What remains? Very little. Seek first My

THE TRUE END OF LIFE

justice, and you shall receive the little in addition.

Woe unto him who wanders in the bottom of the valley, on the borders of the stagnant waters! The corn, destined to appease your hunger, grows not in the mire: I have sown on the high places the grain which shall nourish you.

VII—The Two Neighbors

TWO men were neighbors, and each of them had a wife and several small children, and his sole labor was to make for them a living.

And one of these two men made himself very uneasy, saying : If I die, or if I fall sick, what will become of my wife and my children ?

And this thought did not quit him, and it gnawed at his heart, as a worm gnaws the fruit in which it is hidden.

Now, although the same thought had come likewise to the other father, he would not entertain it ; for, said he, God, who knows all His creatures, and who watches over them, will also watch over me, and over my wife, and over my children.

And this one lived tranquilly, whereas the first did not taste a moment of peace, nor of mental enjoyment.

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One day, as he was laboring in the fields, sad and downcast because of his fear, he saw a number of birds enter a bush, come out, and soon return to it again.

And having approached, he saw two nests placed side by side, and in each several young birds newly hatched and still featherless.

And when he had returned to his labor, from time to time he raised his eyes and watched the birds, as they went and came, carrying food to their young.

But, behold! at the moment that one of the mothers came back with food in her bill, a vulture seizes her, bears her away, and the poor mother, vainly struggling in its talon, uttered piercing cries.

At this sight, the man who was laboring felt his soul more troubled than before: for, thought he, the death of the mother is the death of the children. Mine have also but me. What will become of them if I die?

And the whole day he was gloomy and sad, and at night he slept not.

THE TWO NEIGHBORS

The next morning, on returning to the fields, he said to himself: I will go and see the young of that poor mother; several of them, without doubt, have already perished. And he turned his steps toward the bush.

And looking, he saw the young in good health; not one of them seemed to have suffered.

And surprised at this, he hid himself to watch what would take place.

And after a short time, he heard a feeble cry, and he saw the second mother bringing in haste the food which she had gathered; and she distributed it to all the young, without distinction, and there was enough for all, and the orphans were not forsaken in their distress.

And the father who had doubted Providence related in the evening to the other father what he had seen.

And this one said to him: Wherefore be uneasy? God never abandons His own. His love has secrets which we know not. Let us believe, let us hope, let us love, and pursue our path in peace.

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If I die before you, you will be a father to my children ; if you die before me, I will be the father of yours.

And if we both die before they are old enough to provide for themselves, they will have for a father the Father who is in Heaven.

VIII—*A Lesson from the Swallows*

ALL nature teaches us the indispensable need in which we stand, the one of the other; the divine precept of mutual assistance, of self-sacrifice and love, is incessantly called to our minds by what we observe around us: When the time has come for them to go and look in other climates for the food which the Father in Heaven has there prepared for them, the swallows flock together. From that time, never once separating, little mariners of the air, they take their flight for the shores where they will rest in peace and abundance. Starting each for itself alone, what would become of them? Not one would escape the perils of the journey; united, they resist the winds; the feeble or fatigued wing leans against one that is stronger. Poor, sweet, little creatures, which last spring saw

SERMONETTES

come to light, the youngest-born protected by the elder ones, reach under their guard the termination of their voyage, and on the far-distant shore to which Providence has guided them beyond the sea, they dream of their native nest and its first joys — those mysterious, inexpressible joys which God has placed for all His creatures at the entrance of life.

IX—Justice and Fraternity

WHEN the whole earth groaned in the expectation of deliverance, a voice arose from Judea, the voice of Him who came to suffer and to die for His brothers, and whom some called in scorn the Son of the carpenter.

The Son of the carpenter, then, poor and forlorn in this world, said :

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

And from that day to the present time, not one of those who have believed in Him has remained without relief in his misery.

To cure the evils which afflict mankind, He preached to all justice, which is the origin of love, and love, which is the consummation of justice.

Now, justice commands us to respect the rights of others, and sometimes love bids us

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give up our own rights, for the sake of peace or some other blessing.

What would the world be, if right ceased to reign, if each were not secure in his person, and could not enjoy without fear that which belongs to him?

Better to live in the midst of the forests than in a society thus given up to plunder.

What you shall lay hold of to-day, another will snatch from you to-morrow. Men will be more wretched than the birds of the air, whom the other birds do not rob of their food nor of their nest.

What is a poor man? A man who as yet has no property.

What does he wish for? To cease to be poor; that is to say, to acquire property.

Now, he who robs, who plunders, what does he do but abolish, so far as is in his power, the very right of property?

To plunder, to steal, then, is to attack the poor man as well as the rich man; it is to overthrow the foundation of all society among men.

JUSTICE AND FRATERNITY

Whoever has nothing would be unable to acquire property, except that others already have property ; because they alone can give him something in exchange for his labor.

Order is the advantage, the interest of all.

Drink not at the cup of crime : at the bottom is bitter sorrow, and anguish, and death.

X—The Reward of Justice and Fraternity

NOT to do unto others what we should not wish that others should do unto us, that is justice.

To do unto others, on every occasion, what we should wish that others should do unto us, that is fraternity.

A man lived by his labor, he, his wife, and his little children; and as he enjoyed good health, had vigorous arms, and easily found employment, he could without much difficulty provide for his subsistence and that of his family.

But it came to pass that, times having become very hard over all the country, labor was in little demand, because it no longer yielded profit to employers; and at the same time the price of the necessities of life advanced.

SERMONETTES

Then the laboring man and his family began to suffer much. Having soon exhausted his small savings, he was forced to sell, piece by piece, first his furniture, then most of his clothing; and when he had thus stripped himself, he remained, deprived of all resources, face to face with hunger. And hunger had not entered his dwelling alone: sickness had come in with it.

Now, this man had two neighbors, the one richer, the other less rich.

He called upon the first, and said: We are in want of everything, I, my wife, and my children: have compassion on us.

The rich man answered him: How can I help that? When you have worked for me, have I ever withheld your wages, or have I ever deferred the payment of them? I never did any wrong, neither to you, nor to any other: my hands are clean of all iniquity. I feel sorrow for your distress, but every one must think of himself in these bad times: who knows how long they may last?

REWARD OF JUSTICE AND FRATERNITY

The poor father answered not, and slowly returning home, his heart full of anguish, he met his other neighbor, who was less rich.

The latter, seeing him pensive and sad, said to him : What troubles you? there is care on your brow, there are tears in your eyes.

And the father, with a trembling voice, made known his distress to him.

When he had finished : Wherefore, said the other to him, be so despondent? Are we not brothers? And how could I abandon my brother in his troubles? Come with me, and we will share that which I enjoy through the goodness of God.

In this manner, the family which suffered were relieved until they could provide for themselves.

Several years passed by. The two rich neighbors appeared before the Sovereign Judge of human actions.

And the Judge said to the first : My eye has followed thee on earth : thou hast refrained from wronging thy fellow-men, from violating their rights ; thou hast rigorously accomplished

SERMONETTES

the strict law of justice; but, in accomplishing that, thou hast lived for thyself alone; thy hard, unfeeling soul has not understood the law of love. And now, in this new world, where thou enterest poor and naked, unto thee shall be done as thou didst unto others. Thou hast kept for thyself alone the blessings which fell to thy lot; thou hast bestowed nothing upon thy brothers: nothing shall be given to thee. Thou hast thought of thyself alone: go now, and live on thyself.

And turning toward the second, the Judge said to him: Forasmuch as thou hast not only been just, but fraternity has penetrated thy heart; because that thy hand opened itself to distribute among thy brothers who were less happy the blessings of which thou wast the depositary; and since thy hand wiped away the tears of those who wept: greater blessings shall be given unto thee. Go and receive the reward of him who has fully accomplished his duties: the law of justice and the law of love.

XI—Father and Son

FATHER, labor is wearisome to-day ; the mattock rebounds from the parched earth ; the sun darts rays of fire ; swept by the wind of the south, the dust whirls over the plain.

My son, He who sends the burning blasts sends also the rain-clouds. Each day has its sorrow and its hope ; and after toil, rest.

Father, see those poor plants, how they languish, how their fading leaves droop along the stalk, bending beneath its own weight.

They will revive, my son ; not a blade of grass is forgotten ; there are always for it, among the treasures of heaven, fertilizing showers and refreshing dews.

Father, the birds are silent in the trees ; the quail, motionless in the upturned furrow, does not even call his mate ; the heifer seeks the shade, and the bull, his legs bending under his

SERMONETTES

bulky body, his neck extended, dilates his large nostrils to inhale the air which he needs.

My son, God will restore to the birds their voice, to the bulls and to the heifers their strength, exhausted by this burning heat. Already, across the waters, blows the breeze which will reanimate them.

Father, let us sit down in the brake at the edge of the pond, beside that aged oak whose hanging branches lightly touch the surface of the water. How calm and transparent it is ! How merrily the fishes sport there ! Some pursue their winged prey, poor gnats that were just beginning to live ; others, raising up their heads, seem, with their mouths half open, to give the air a light kiss.

My son, He who has made all things has distributed everywhere His inexhaustible gifts, both life and the joy of life. Evil is but in appearance, the dark side of love, one face of good, its shadow.

Yet, father ! what toil, what hardships you suffer, that you may provide for our wants !

FATHER AND SON

Are you not poor? Is mother not poor? It is in your sweat that I have been nourished; and for a single day have you been free from anxiety for the morrow?

Why think of the morrow, my son? Tomorrow is for God; let us put our trust in Him. He who rises in the morning knows not if he shall reach the evening. Why then be troubled and uneasy about a time which perhaps will never come? We pass here below like the swallow, seeking each day a daily subsistence; and, like the swallow, when winter comes, a mysterious power draws us to climes more mild.

What is that, father? it seems like a dead body wrapped in its shroud, or a babe rolled in its swaddling-clothes.

My son, it was a creeping worm; it will soon be a living flower, an airy form, which, spangled with the most vivid hues, will mount toward the heavens.

XII—Mother and Daughter

IT was a winter night. The wind howled without, and the snow whitened the roofs.

Beneath one of those roofs, in a narrow chamber, were sitting at work a woman with white hair and a young maiden.

And from time to time the aged woman warmed her thin hands at a small brasier. A lamp of clay shed its feeble light around in this wretched abode, and a ray from the lamp seemed to expire upon a picture of the Blessed Virgin, hanging on the wall.

And the young maiden, lifting her eyes, gazed in silence for a few moments upon the white-haired woman ; then said to her : Mother, you have not always been in such destitution.

And there was in her voice a sweetness and a tenderness indescribable.

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And the white-haired woman replied: My daughter, God is our Master; what He does is well done.

Having uttered these words, she was silent for a time; then she resumed:

When I lost your father, it was an affliction which I believed beyond consolation: however, you were left to me; but, I thought at that time of only one thing.

Later, I knew that if he had lived, and had seen us in such distress, his heart would have broken; and I realized that God had been good to him.

The young maiden made no answer, but dropped her head, and a few tears, which she strove to hide, fell upon the linen which she held in her hands.

The mother went on: God, who has been good to him, has been good to us also. Of what have we been in want, while so many others are in want of everything?

It is true, we have been compelled to accustom ourselves to a little, and to earn that little

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

by our labor ; but does that little not suffice us ? and have not all, from the beginning, been condemned to live by their labor ?

God, in His kindness, has given us every day our daily bread ; and how many have it not ! a shelter—and how many know not where to betake themselves !

He has given you, my daughter, to me : of what should I complain ?

At these last words, the young maiden, much moved, sunk down at her mother's knee, took her hands, kissed them, and leaned upon her bosom, weeping.

And the mother, making an effort to raise her voice, said : My daughter, happiness is not in possessing much, but in hoping and loving much.

Our hope is not of this world, nor is our love, and if it be, it is only fleeting.

After God, you are my all in this world ; but this world passes away like a dream, and that is why my love rises with you to another world.

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When I carried you unborn, one day I prayed more ardently to the Virgin Mary, and she appeared to me during my sleep, and, with a celestial smile, she seemed to present to me a little child.

And I took the infant which she offered me; and as I held it in my arms, the Virgin-Mother placed on its head a crown of white roses.

A few months later you were born, and the sweet vision was always before my eyes.

Saying this, the white-haired woman trembled, and pressed to her heart the young maiden.

A short time after that a devout soul saw two shining forms ascend toward Heaven, and a group of angels bore them company, and the air resounded with their songs of gladness.

XIII—The Traveller and the Rock

A MAN was travelling in the mountains, and he arrived in a place where a huge rock, having rolled down on the path, filled it up entirely, and, except the path, there was no passage, either on the left or on the right.

Now, that man, seeing that he could not continue his journey on account of the rock, endeavored to remove it to make himself a passage; and he wearied himself very much in the attempt, and all his efforts were vain.

Seeing which, he sat down, filled with sadness, and said: What will become of me when night comes on and overtakes me in this solitude, without food, without shelter, without any defense, at the hour when the wild beasts come out to search for their prey?

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And while he was absorbed in that thought, it chanced that another traveller came ; and the latter, having attempted to do what the first had attempted, and having also found himself unable to remove the rock, sat down in silence and bowed his head.

And after this one, several others came, and not one was able to remove the rock, and the fear of all was great.

Finally one of them said to the others : Brothers, let us pray to our Father, who is in Heaven ; perhaps He may take pity on us in our distress.

And this counsel was heeded, and they prayed from their hearts to the Father who is in Heaven.

And when they had prayed, he who had said, Let us pray, spoke again : Brothers, that which no one of us has been able to do alone, who knows but we may accomplish it together ?

And they rose up, and all together they pushed against the rock ; and the rock yielded, and they proceeded on their way in peace.

THE TRAVELLER AND THE ROCK

The traveller is man, the journey is life, the rock is the trouble which he meets at every step on his path.

No man would be able to raise that rock alone ; but God has measured the weight of it, so that it never blocks the way of those who journey together.

XIV — The Fruit of Sin

THE weather was sultry. A man perceived at the base of a hill a vine loaded with grapes ; and that man was thirsty, and the desire came upon him to quench his thirst with the fruit of the vine.

But between it and him was spread out a muddy swamp, which must be passed to reach the hill ; and he lacked resolution.

Yet, his thirst urging, he said : It may be that the mire is not deep ; who hinders me from attempting what so many others have done ? I shall but soil my shoes, and the harm, after all, will not be great.

Thereupon he steps into the swamp, his foot sinks into the foul mud ; soon he sinks as far as the knee.

He stops, he hesitates, he asks himself : were it not better to return again ? But the vine and

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its grapes are before him there, and he feels his thirst increasing.

Since I have gone so far, why, says he, should I retrace my steps? Wherefore should I lose my labor? A little mud, more or less, makes no difference now. Besides, I shall only be put to the trouble of washing in the first brook.

That thought decides him; he goes forward, he advances farther, sinking always deeper and deeper into the mire; he sinks as far as his breast, then to his neck, then to his lips; it passes finally above his head. Smothering and gasping, a last effort extricates him and carries him to the foot of the hill.

Covered over with black slime, which runs down his limbs, he plucks the fruit so much coveted, he devours it. After which, ill at ease, ashamed of himself, he strips off his clothing, and searches on all sides for clear water to cleanse himself. But, all in vain, the stench remains; the exhalation of the swamp has penetrated his flesh and his bones, it emanates from him continually and forms around him a fetid

THE FRUIT OF SIN

atmosphere. If he approaches people, they rush away. People shun him. He has made himself a reptile, let him go and live among reptiles.

XV — Liberty and Justice

THE ploughman bears the burden of the day, exposes himself to the rain, to the sun, to the winds, to make ready by his labor for the harvest, which will fill his granaries in autumn.

Justice is the harvest of nations.

The artisan arises before the break of day, lights his small lamp, and toils without ceasing to earn the morsel of bread which sustains him and his children.

Justice is the bread of nations.

The merchant hesitates at no labor, complains of no fatigue ; he wastes his body and forgets his sleep in amassing wealth.

Liberty is the wealth of nations.

The sailor ploughs the seas, risks himself on the waves and in tempests, hazards himself amid shoals, endures cold and heat, to secure for himself some repose in his old age.

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Liberty is the repose of nations.

The soldier submits to most cruel privations ; he keeps watch and fights, and sheds his blood for what he calls glory.

Liberty is the glory of nations.

If there is a nation which less esteems justice and liberty than the ploughman his harvest, the artisan his morsel of bread, the merchant his wealth, the sailor his repose, and the soldier his glory, — raise around that nation a high wall, that its breath may not infect the rest of the earth.

When the great day of judgment shall come to the nations, unto that nation it will be said : What hast thou done with thy soul ? no sign nor trace of it has been discovered. The pleasures of the brute only have been thine. Thou hast loved the mire ; go, perish in it.

And, on the other hand, the nation which, above all material benefits, shall have given place in its heart to the true blessings, which shall have spared no toil, no fatigue, no sacrifice to attain them, will hear these words :

LIBERTY AND JUSTICE

To those who have a soul, be the soul's recompense. Because thou hast loved beyond all things liberty and justice, come and enjoy forever justice and liberty.

XVI— The Slave and the Freeman

THINKEST thou that the ox, which is fed in the stall to labor under the yoke, and which is fattened for the shambles, is more to be envied than the bull that seeks in freedom his food in the forest?

Thinkest thou that the horse, which is saddled and bridled, and which has always plenty of hay in his rack, enjoys a lot preferable to that of the stallion who, freed from all restraint, neighs and bounds over the plain?

Thinkest thou that the fowl, to which is flung grain in the poultry-yard, is happier than the wood-pigeon, which at morn knows not where it shall find its food for the day?

Thinkest thou that he who saunters at leisure through one of those parks which are called

SERMONETTES

kingdoms leads a life more sweet than the exile who, from forest to forest, and from height to height, sets out, with his heart full of hope, to create a fatherland?

Thinkest thou that the stupid serf, sitting at the table of his lord, relishes the exquisite dishes better than the soldier of liberty his crust of bread?

Thinkest thou that he who falls asleep, with the slave's collar around his neck, upon the straw which his master has thrown down for him, enjoys sweeter sleep than he who, after having fought during the day to free himself from every master, rests a few hours at night on the earth in the corner of an open field?

Thinkest thou that the poltroon, who everywhere trails the chain of slavery, is less burdened than the man of courage who bears the shackles of the prisoner?

Thinkest thou that the timid man who expires in his bed, suffocated by the impure air which surrounds tyranny, dies a death more desirable than the undaunted man who, upon

THE SLAVE AND THE FREEMAN

the scaffold, renders to God a soul free as he received it from Him?

Labor is everywhere and suffering everywhere :
yet there are barren labors and fruitful labors,
infamous sufferings and glorious sufferings.

XVII—Religious Intolerance

THE time has been when man, in cutting the throat of his fellow, whose faith differed from his own, believed that he offered a sacrifice agreeable to God.

Let those horrible murders be an abomination to you.

How could the murder of man be pleasing to God, who has said to man : Thou shalt not kill ?

When the blood of man flows upon the earth as an offering to God, demons run to drink it, and enter into him who has spilled it.

One commences to persecute only when he despairs of convincing, and whoever despairs of convincing either thinks blasphemy against the power of truth, or lacks faith in the truth of the doctrines which he teaches.

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What is more insane than to say to men :
Believe, or die !

Faith is the daughter of the Word : she enters into the heart with persuasion, and not with the dagger.

Jesus went about doing good, attracting by His kindness and touching with His sweetness souls the most hardened.

His divine lips blessed and cursed not, unless, may be, the hypocrites. He did not choose executioners for apostles.

He said to His own : Let the good and the bad seed grow together until the harvest ; the householder shall make the separation on the threshing-floor.

And to those who urged Him to cause fire from Heaven to descend upon a city of unbelievers : Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

The spirit of Jesus is a spirit of peace, of mercy, and of love.

Those who carry on persecution in His name, who search conscience with the sword, who

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

torture the body to convert the soul, who cause tears to flow, instead of wiping them away: such have not the spirit of Jesus.

Woe unto him who profanes the Gospel, making it to men an object of terror! Woe unto him who writes the glad tidings on a page in blood!

Remember the catacombs.

In that time they dragged you to the scaffold; they gave you up to wild beasts in the amphitheatre to amuse the rabble; they cast you by thousands into deep mines and into prisons; they confiscated your goods; they trod you under foot like the mire of the streets; you had no other asylum where you could celebrate your proscribed worship than the bowels of the earth.

What said your persecutors? They said that you propagated dangerous teachings; that your sect, as they called it, disturbed order and public peace; that you, violators of law and enemies of mankind, shook the empire in unsettling the religion of the empire.

SERMONETTES

And in this distress, under this oppression, for what did you ask? liberty. You claimed the right of obeying God only, of serving Him, and of worshipping Him, according to your conscience.

When, although mistaken in their faith, others shall claim of you this sacred right, respect it in them, even as you demanded the heathen to respect it in you.

Respect it, that you may not dishonor the memory of your confessors, and may not defile the ashes of your martyrs.

Persecution is two-edged: it wounds to the right and to the left.

If you are forgetful of Christ's teachings, remember the catacombs.

XVIII — Observation of Duty — the Fulfilment of the Law

DUTY extends itself to all beings, for all have their place in the Universe; all—according to the views of Supreme Wisdom—fulfil functions which it is forbidden to disturb; all enjoy the gift divine, and have a right to enjoy it. To destroy a single one among them from pure caprice, or inflict upon him useless sufferings, is a wicked action, an action opposed to the laws of order.

Respect God in His least works, and let your love, like His, embrace everything that breathes and lives.

If, in endowing man with intellect, He has made him the king of nature, His will was not that man should be the tyrant of nature. His

SERMONETTES

eye, from which nothing escapes, has a fatherly care even for the poor sparrow which quivers with fear under your hand.

No society is possible without duty, for without it there can exist no tie among men.

Interrogate everywhere unprejudiced reason, and the conscience that neither self-interest nor passion has corrupted, and they will answer you that man is sacred to man ; that, to attack him in his person, in his liberty, or in his property, is to overthrow the basis of order, is to violate the moral, preservative laws of mankind, is to perpetrate one of those acts which, in all centuries and among all nations, have received the terrible name of Crime.

There exists a voice without you, immutable, eternal, and another voice within you ; and both those voices tell you :

Thou shalt do no murder ; thou shalt not steal ; thou shalt dishonor neither the virtue of the wife nor the chastity of the young maiden ; thy thought even shall be clean of those abominations.

OBSERVATION OF DUTY

Whosoever spills the blood of his brother is accursed on earth and accursed in Heaven.

And accursed also is he who, through craft or violence, takes away from his brother either his liberty or any portion whatsoever of that which he legitimately possesses ; who carries into his family disorder, with all the evils to which disorder gives birth : shame, discord, the torments of mind, distrust, hatred, and oftentimes ruin.

The plants of the fields, grouped together, extend their roots in the soil, which nourishes them all, and all grow up in peace. Not one of them absorbs the sap of another, causes its blossom to wither, or spoils its fragrance. Wherefore is man less kind to man ?

Banish from your heart all wicked desires and all wicked thoughts ; for, to take a delight in the thought and in the desire of evil is already to have accomplished the evil.

There are words which kill ; be watchful, therefore, over your tongue, and that it never be soiled with evil-speaking and slander.

SERMONETTES

Envy, anger, vindictiveness, hatred, devour the soul which conceals them, and that tormented soul is perpetually as if in travail to give birth to murder.

Have you been offended? forgive, that you may be forgiven. Who does not stand in need of forgiveness? and who can say to himself: Not one could with justice complain of me?

Do not walk in tortuous paths, and let your word be always true; that it never offend the ear of chastity, nor wound the respect which man owes to man, and owes to himself.

He also owes to himself that he should shun everything which would degrade and debase him by bringing him nearer to the brute: all sensual excesses, fatal habits, which wear out the body, stupefy the mind, and make beholders, no longer recognizing in him an intelligent creature, turn aside their eyes from him with disgust.

In us there exist two beings, the animal and the angel, and our labor should be to combat the one, in order that the other dominate alone,

OBSERVATION OF DUTY

until the moment when, liberated from his weighty envelope, he shall take his flight toward better and higher regions.

Acting in this manner, you will injure no one, you will be just; but other duties besides, grand and sacred duties, will remain for you to fulfil.

Has he who has simply refrained from evil, who has done to his fellow-creature neither the slightest wrong nor the slightest good, has he fulfilled his duties to him, and is he perfect before God? In depositing at the bottom of our heart the germ of love and of pity, of all sympathetic feeling, has not the Father in Heaven endowed us with other virtues, more elevated and more far-reaching?

Behold yonder poor human creature, lying at the corner of the street, fainting from want, or whom an accident has cast mangled there. A man looks at him, pities him, and passes by. Am I the cause, says he to himself, that he is there in that condition? And who has made me his keeper? It is more than enough that one

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must think of one's self. Another looks upon him also, and his heart is moved. He approaches, takes him in his arms, carries him to his home, lays him on his bed, watches by him, and takes care of him as a brother takes care of a brother, and a friend of his friend.

Which of these two men has truly accomplished his duty?

There will always be evils on earth, and those evils must always be remedied.

Is your brother hungry? you owe him the nourishment he is in want of; is he naked, without roof, without refuge? you owe him clothing and a place of shelter; sick? you owe him assistance. He is your flesh, for you are all members of one and the same body, which one and the same soul must animate. Treat him, therefore, as your own flesh.

There are many kinds of weakness and many sorts of destitution; and each weakness has a claim to protection, every destitution to relief. But for that, I ask you, what would human society be? what would the world be? What

OBSERVATION OF DUTY

would become of those whom infirmity, poverty, isolation, old age, simplicity of mind, and ignorance leave an easy prey to the snares of the wicked?

Resent the injustice done unto others with the same energy, the same resolution, as if it were done unto yourself; stretch forth your hand between the oppressor and the oppressed. Your brother is yourself; and if he is oppressed, are you not oppressed likewise?

Let the orphan find in you a father; the widow and the old man a staff of support; the stranger a helpful host; be the eye of the blind man, and the foot of the cripple.

To the afflicted speak those words from the heart which soothe the bitterness of their tears. There are no sufferings which sympathy does not alleviate. The sorrows of life are dissipated by the rays of fraternal love, even as the frosts in autumn melt away before the morning sun.

Whoever gives in season good advice, a wise warning, or useful instruction, gives more than if he gave gold; and to impart that which one

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knows, to spread science, is sowing the seed which will nourish successive generations.

Do not think that you can do too much in order to obtain peace: peace, which is the foundation of all happiness, is at the same time its crowning work. Bear with others, that they may bear with you. Have we not all our foibles, our failings, our disagreeable moments? Patience gradually softens the rudest asperities; let nothing, then, exhaust your patience, neither irritating words nor provoking levity. Be like unto the vine, whose juice is so much the sweeter as it grows in a stonier soil.

To respect the life, the liberty, and the property of others;

To assist others in the preserving and the developing of their life, their liberty, and their property:

These two precepts contain in substance the duties of justice and fraternity. To detail them would be infinite, for they include all the thoughts, all the feelings, all the actions of man, and one single precept comprises them

OBSERVATION OF DUTY

all : the divine precept of love. Love, and do whatever you please ; for you shall wish for nothing but what is just and good. Love, says the Sovereign Master, and thou shalt perfectly fulfil the law.

XIX—The City of Satan and the City of God

THE evils which afflict the earth come not from God, for God is love, and all that He has made is good; they come from Satan whom God has accursed, and from those men who have Satan for father and for master.

Now, the children of Satan are numerous in the world. In order as they pass by, God records their names in a sealed book, which will be opened and read before all at the end of time.

There are men who love only themselves; and these are men of hatred, for to love one's self alone is to hate others.

There are men of pride, who can endure no equals, who always wish to command and domineer.

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There are men of covetousness, who constantly cry for gold, for honors, for pleasures, and are never satisfied.

There are men of rapine, who lie in wait for the feeble to despoil him by force or by cunning, and who prowl by night around the dwelling of the widow and of the orphan.

There are men of slaughter, who have only thoughts of violence, who say, "You are our brothers," and kill those whom they call their brothers, as soon as they suspect them to be opposed to their designs, and who write their laws with blood.

There are men of fear, who tremble before the wicked and kiss his hand, hoping thus to escape from his oppression, and who, when one innocent is attacked on the public square, hasten to return home, and make fast their door.

All those men have destroyed peace, safety, and liberty upon the earth.

You will then restore liberty, safety, peace, only by struggling against those men without ceasing.

CITY OF SATAN AND CITY OF GOD

The city which they have founded is the city of Satan; you have to rebuild the city of God.

In the city of God each loves his brother as himself, and that is why no one is forsaken; no one suffers there, if there be a remedy for his sufferings.

In the city of God all are equal, no one domineers, for justice reigns alone there with love.

In the city of God each possesses his own without fear, and desires nothing more, because that which each has is for all, and because all possess God, who unites in Himself all riches.

In the city of God no one sacrifices others to himself, but each stands ready to sacrifice himself for others.

In the city of God should a wicked person creep in, all shun him, and all unite to restrain him, or to drive him out: for the wicked is the enemy of each, and the enemy of each is the enemy of all.

When you shall have rebuilt the city of God, the earth will bloom again, and the nations will

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flourish anew, because you will have overcome the children of Satan, who oppress the nations and lay waste the earth, — the men of pride, the men of rapine, the men of slaughter, and the men of fear.

XX—The Millennium

WHEN, after a long drought, a gentle rain falls upon the earth, it drinks up with avidity the water from Heaven, which refreshes it and makes it fertile.

Thus, the thirsting nations will drink in with avidity the word of God, as it descends upon them like a summer shower.

And justice with love, and peace and liberty will spring up in their breasts.

And it will be as in the time when all were brothers, and there will be heard no more the voice of the master, nor the voice of the slave, the groans of the poor, nor the sighs of the oppressed, only songs of gladness and of thanksgiving.

Fathers will say to their sons : Our early days were troubled, full of tears and of anguish.

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Now, the sun rises and sets upon our joy.
Praised be God, who has shown us these mercies
before death !

And mothers will say to their daughters :
Behold our brows, now so smooth ; formerly,
trouble, grief, unrest traced there deep furrows.
Yours are like the surface of a lake in spring-
time, agitated by no breeze. Praised be God,
who has shown us these mercies before death !

And the young men will say to the youthful
maidens : You are beautiful as the flowers of
the field, pure as the dew which refreshes them,
as the light which gives them color. It is sweet
to see our fathers, sweet to be near our mothers ;
but, when we behold you and are near you,
there moves in our souls something unnamed
but in Heaven. Praised be God, who has shown
us these mercies before death !

And the youthful maidens will reply : The
flowers fade, they pass away ; there comes a
day when no more the dew refreshes them,
nor the light gives them color. There is nothing
upon the earth that never fades nor passes away,

THE MILLENNIUM

except virtue. Our fathers are like the ripened ear in autumn, and our mothers like the vine, loaded with fruit. It is sweet to see our fathers ; it is sweet to be at our mothers' side : and the sons of our fathers and of our mothers are also dear to us. Praised be God, who has shown us these mercies before death !

XXI—Life and Death

THAT marvellous order, those beautiful and touching harmonies, which charm us in nature, whence do they come? From everything being in its place, and maintaining itself there invariably. Each being, obeying with punctual regularity the general laws and its particular laws, faithfully fulfils the function which the Creator assigned to it. From the sun, whence pour forth inexhaustible torrents of light and of life, to the source of the river, which comes down, drop by drop, from the rock—everything is regulated to one and the same design, and everything contributes to it in an infinite variety of ways, which our thought admires more and more, the longer we contemplate them. There is not in the universe one action, one movement, which does not, immediately in its turn, co-operate in the growth of the moss-plant; and the different worlds, after having gone, like the moss-plant, through all

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the phases of development, are decomposed like it, to furnish nourishment for other worlds.

There is not one creature whose existence does not depend upon other creatures. In order that the one may subsist, a continual transfusion of the substance of others must take place. What is life? A receiving. What is death? A giving. Life, in its first condition, is a sacrifice, a perpetual and universal communion.

That which inert bodies, plants, animals destitute of reason, do blindly and necessarily, subjected as they are to a fatal, irresistible impulse, man must do freely; subordinating himself to the whole, of which he is a member, he must love his brothers as he loves himself, wish for their happiness as he wishes for his own, rejoice in their joys, grieve over their troubles, help them, serve them, identify himself with them, sacrifice himself for them, and, in this manner, through an evermore growing union of individuals and nations, work at consummating the Holy Unity of Mankind.

XXII—The Church-Yard

AT the hour when the East begins to grow dusky, when all sounds die away, he trod slowly beside the ripening fields, the solitary path.

The bee had returned to its hive, the bird to its nightly perch ; the leaves slumbered motionless upon their stems ; a sad, sweet silence enwrapped the drowsy earth.

A single voice, the distant voice of the village church-bell, vibrated through the calm air.

It said : Remember the dead.

And, as if fascinated by his dreams, it seemed to him that the voice of the dead, weak and uncertain, mingled with that voice in the air.

Do you return to visit the places where your rapid journey was completed, to seek

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there souvenirs of griefs and joys which so quickly passed?

Like the smoke which rises from our thatched roofs and suddenly disappears, so you have vanished.

Your tombstones are becoming moss-grown beneath the old yew-tree in yonder grave-yard. When the dewy zephyrs of eve whisper in the high grass, one might call it the sighing of spirits. Spouses of death, is it you who tremble upon your mysterious bed?

Now you are at peace: no more cares, no more tears; now for you shine stars more brilliant; a sun more radiant floods with his splendors plains, ethereal seas, and boundless horizons.

Oh, tell me of the mysteries of that world which my longings foreshadow, into the midst of which my soul, wearied by the shadows of earth, yearns to lose itself. Tell me of Him who made it and occupies it, and alone is able to fill the vast emptiness which He has left in me.

THE CHURCH-YARD

Brothers, after waiting, consoled by faith, your hour is come. Mine also will come, and others in their turn, their day of labor finished, re-entering their wretched huts, will give ear to the voice that says: Remember the dead.

XXIII—*The Dead*

THEY also have passed over this earth ; they have descended the river of time ; their voice was heard on its banks, and then was heard no more. Where are they ? Who can tell us ? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord !*

Whilst they were passing, a thousand vain shadows presented themselves to their eyes ; the world, which Christ has accursed, displayed to them its grandeurs, its riches, its pleasures ; they beheld it, and suddenly they beheld nothing but eternity. Where are they ? Who can tell us ? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord !*

Like a ray from on high, a cross appeared in the distance to guide their course : but all did not look upon it. Where are they ? Who can tell us ? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord !*

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Some among them said: What mean these waves which bear us away? Is there anything after this rapid voyage? We know not, no one knows. And, as they said this, the banks vanished. Where are they? Who can tell us? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord!*

Some also, in deep meditation, seemed to listen to mysterious words; and then, with eye fixed on the west, they suddenly sang to an invisible aurora and a day which never ends. Where are they? Who can tell us? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord!*

Carried away without distinction, young and old, all disappeared as the ship which the tempest drives onward. It would be easier to count the sands of the sea than the number of those who hastened to pass. Where are they? Who can tell us? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord!*

Those who saw them have told that great sadness was in their heart: agony heaved their chest, and, as if wearied with the labor of living, raising their eyes toward Heaven, they wept.

THE DEAD

Where are they? Who can tell us? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord!*

From the unknown places where the river loses itself, two voices arise incessantly: The one says: *From the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou wilt observe iniquities, O Lord: Lord, who shall endure it? But, with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him plentiful redemption.*¹

And the other: *We praise Thee, O God! We bless Thee: holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.*²

And we also, we shall go there, whence proceed those lamentations or those songs of triumph. Where shall we be? Who can tell us? *Happy the dead who die in the Lord!*

¹ De profunda.

² Te Deum laudamus.

XXIV — The Trinity

AND the fatherland was shown unto me.

I was borne away beyond the region of shadows, and I saw time carry them off with indescribable swiftness through the void, as one sees the breeze from the South carry away the light vapors which creep in the distance over the plain.

And I ascended, higher and still higher ; and realities invisible to the eye of flesh became visible to me, and, in that world of phantoms I heard sounds which have no echo.

And what I heard, what I beheld, was so real, my soul laid hold of it with such vigor, that it seemed to me as if all I formerly

SERMONETTES

thought I had seen and heard was but a vague dream of the night.

What shall I declare then unto the children of night, and what are they able to understand? And, from the heights of eternal day, am I not also fallen back with them into the bosom of night, into the region of time and of shadows?

I saw as it were an ocean, moveless, vast, infinite; and within that ocean, three oceans: an ocean of strength, an ocean of light, an ocean of life; and these three oceans, penetrating one another without confusion, formed but a single ocean, but one unity, indivisible, absolute, eternal.

And that unity was He that is; and, in the midst of His being, a wondrous knot bound together three Persons, who were named to me, and their names were the Father, the Son, the Spirit; and there was a generating mysterious, a breathing mysterious, vigorous, fruitful; and the Father, the Son, the Spirit, were He that is.

THE TRINITY

And the Father appeared to me as a Power which, within the Being Infinite, one with it, has but a single function, lasting, perfect, without limit, which is the Infinite Being Himself.

And the Son appeared to me as a Word, lasting, perfect, without limit, which proclaims the works of the power of the Father, that which He is, that which is the Being Infinite.

And the Spirit appeared to me as the Love, the effusion, the mutual aspiration of the Father and of the Son, animating them with a common life, animating with a life, lasting, perfect, without limit, the Infinite Being.

And these three were One, and these three were God, and they embraced one another, and were united in the impenetrable sanctuary of the one substance; and that union, that embrace, were, in the bosom of immensity, the eternal joy, the eternal felicity of Him that is.

And in the midst of that infinite ocean of being, creation swam and floated and expanded itself like an island that should constantly expand its coasts in a sea without shore.

SERMONETTES

It expanded like a flower that takes root in the water and extends its long stems and its petals on the surface.

And I beheld the beings link themselves to other beings, and reproduce and develop themselves in their numberless variety, drinking in plentifully, nourishing themselves with a sap which never dries up, with the strength, with the light, and with the life of Him that is.

And all that had been hidden from me until then was unveiled to my gaze, which was no longer obstructed by the material envelope of existence.

Liberated from earthly clogs, I went from world to world, as here below the mind flies from thought to thought; and after having been plunged, lost in those wonders of the Power, of the Wisdom and of the Love, I plunged, I lost myself in the very fountain of Love, of Wisdom, and of Power.

And I understood what is the fatherland; and I was intoxicated with light, and my soul, enraptured with strains of harmony, sank to

THE TRINITY

sleep on the celestial waves, in an indescribable ecstasy.

And then I beheld Christ on the right hand of His father, radiant with a glory immortal.

And I beheld Him also like a mystic lamb, sacrificed upon an altar ; myriads of angels and the men redeemed by His blood surrounded Him, and, singing His praises, they rendered thanks unto Him in the language of Heaven.

And a drop of blood from the Lamb fell upon Nature faint and sick, and I saw her transfigured ; and all the creatures, which she supports, throbbed with new life, and all raised their voices, and those voices said :

Holy, Holy, Holy, is He who hath destroyed evil and conquered death.

And the Son rested on the bosom of the Father, and the Spirit overspread them with His shadow, and there was among them a mystery divine, and the heavens in silence trembled.

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